contexts means speech, talk, or word, but when used in prayers and invocations in the phrase '*e rwacdu*', 'it is thy word', it means the will of God; and when used in reference to creation it has almost the meaning of the creative word: 'he created the world, it is his word'.

The Nuer can hardly be said to have a creation myth, though our authorities[1] record some fragmentary accounts of the creation of men, parts of which I have myself heard. These state that men were created in the Jagei country of western Nuerland at a certain tamarind tree, at the foot of which offerings, and according to Mr. Jackson sacrifices, were sometimes made till it was destroyed by fire in 1918. Many details in the versions given by Mr. Jackson and Captain Fergusson are clearly foreign, either Dinka or in Mr. Jackson's account Shilluk and in Captain Fergusson's account possibly even Atwot or Mandari, and I regard Father Crazzolara's version as the closest to Nuer tradition. In this version the tamarind tree, called Lic, was itself the mother of men who, according to one account, emerged from a hole at its foot or, according to another account, dropped off its branches like ripe fruits.

Whether they are speaking about events which happened *ne walka*, in the beginning or long ago, or about happenings of yesterday or today, God, creative Spirit, is the final Nuer explanation of everything. When asked how things began or how they have come to be what they are they answer that God made them or that it was his will that they have come to be what they are. The heavens and the earth and the waters on the earth, and the beasts and birds and reptiles and fish were made by him, and he is the author of custom and tradition. The Nuer herd cattle and cultivate millet and spear fish because God gave them these things for their sustenance. He instituted their marriage prohibitions. He gave ritual powers to some men and not to others. He decreed that the Nuer should raid the Dinka and that Europeans should conquer the Nuer. He made one man black and another white (according to one account our white skins are a punishment by God for incest committed by our ancestor with his mother), one man fleet and another slow, one strong and another weak. Everything in nature, in culture, in society, and in men is as it is because

[1] H. C. Jackson, 'The Nuer of the Upper Nile Province', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1923, pp. 70–71; V. H. Fergusson, 'The Nuong Nuer', ibid., 1921, pp. 148–9; J. P. Crazzolara, op. cit., p. 66.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

GOD

God made or willed it so. Above all else God is thought of as the giver and sustainer of life. He also brings death. It is true that Nuer seldom attribute death—in such cases as death by lightning or following the breach of a divinely sanctioned interdiction—to the direct intervention of God, but rather to natural circumstances or to the action of a lesser spirit, but they nevertheless regard the natural circumstances or the spirits as instruments or agents of God, and the final appeal in sickness is made to him. Nuer have often told me that it is God who takes the life, whether a man dies from spear, wild beast, or sickness, for these are all *nyin kwoth*, instruments of God.

In the Nuer conception of God he is thus creative Spirit. He is also a *ran*, a living person, whose *yiegh*, breath or life, sustains man. I have never heard Nuer suggest that he has human form, but though he is himself ubiquitous and invisible, he sees and hears all that happens and he can be angry and can love (the Nuer word is *nhok*, and if we here translate it 'to love' it must be understood in the preferential sense of *agapō* or *diligo*: when Nuer say that God loves something they mean that he is partial to it). However, the anthropomorphic features of the Nuer conception of God are very weak and, as will be seen, they do not act towards him as though he were a man. Indeed, such human features as are given him barely suffice to satisfy the requirements of thought and speech. If he is to be spoken about, or to, he has to be given some human attributes. Man's relation to him is, as it is among other peoples,[1] on the model of a human social relationship. He is the father of men.

A very common mode of address to the Deity is '*gwandong*', a word which means 'grandfather' or 'ancestor', and literally 'old father', but in a religious context 'father' or 'our father' would convey the Nuer sense better; and '*gwara*' and '*gwandan*', 'our father', and the respectful form of address '*gwadin*', 'father', are also often used in speaking to or about God. God is the father of men in two respects. He is their creator and he is their protector.

He is addressed in prayers as '*kwoth me cak gwadong*', 'God who created my ancestor'. Figuratively, and in conformity with Nuer lineage idiom, he is sometimes given a genealogical position in relation to man. A man of the Jinaca clan, for example, after tracing his pedigree back to Denac, the founder of his clan, may

[1] Friedrich Heiler, *Das Gebet*, 3rd ed., 1921, pp. 490 seq.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

776 782 was a *yang kwoth*, the cow of a spirit, and that no good would come of my possessing it. They were not surprised when one night it tore up its tethering-peg and fell into the Sobat river and was drowned. The *Sudan Intelligence Report* of September–October 1934, No. 69, records the interesting case of a man who was ordered by a Government Chiefs' Court to pay a cow in damages to another Nuer. As at the time he possessed only one cow and this was dedicated to a spirit, the Court permitted him to defer payment while he went to obtain a cow owing to him in a different part of the country. During his absence from home on [761] this errand one of the Government chiefs took his cow. The owner was killed by an elephant on his journey and his kinsmen claimed compensation from the chief because they attributed his death to the removal of the cow devoted to his spirit. The milk of a spirit's [262] cow should only be drunk by members of the family. It belongs to the spirit and is therefore reserved for the people to whom it is attached. I was first made aware of this rule when on a journey I fell sick in a Nuer village and was compelled to spend a few days there. Being unable to eat solid food, I asked a lad of the nearest homestead if I might have a little milk. He said that he was sorry, but the only cow giving milk in his family herd was the cow of his mother's spirit, and he could not let me have its milk without her permission. He later brought some milk and told me that it would be all right for me to drink it as I was sick, but when I could eat again only the children of the home might either milk the cow or drink its milk.

Should a man neglect to dedicate a cow to his spirit when he is in a position to do so, or should he dispose of a beast already devoted to the spirit and not dedicate another to it, sickness is [753] likely to fall on his family or herd. But although Nuer say this, and believe what they say, it is not uncommon for them to use a spirit's cow for bridewealth or some other purpose, hoping that they will soon be able to replace it. They know that they are doing wrong but they think that maybe the spirit, having been informed of their intentions, will understand their difficulty and will excuse their manner of overcoming it, knowing that they mean to keep their promise to give it another cow as soon as they can. But they may not find it easy to procure another cow for some time and the spirit has in the meantime to go without one; or they keep on putting off the replacement because they want to use

SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

×776 821 782 Come to earth gently, do not come with fury to thy grass [the thatched roof]. Come gently to thy grass. No one disputes with thee. It is thy universe. It is thy will, thine alone.' Or a man may take a mallet, used for driving tethering-pegs into the ground, lay it in the doorway to his byre, and, after asking God to 'rain well' for it is his universe, throw some ashes into the air in offering. Once when after a heavy storm I told a Nuer that should there be another storm of like severity I would desert my tent and take shelter in his byre he rebuked me, saying 'God does not wish the thunder to come like that again. You should not suggest it.'

×776 ●761 766 When a person is killed by lightning Nuer are resigned. They say that God has struck him with his fire and that as God has taken him there is nothing to be said. God has taken the soul of the man to himself and 'he would be angry if he saw you grieving for the person whom he has taken'. The death is not a punishment for some fault but a mysterious act of divine will, almost what some theologians call an election. All death is ultimately attributed to God, but only in the sense of his being the first and necessary cause which operates through secondary and contingent causes. In the case of a *colwic*, however, God has chosen a particular person for himself and taken him with his own hand. Nuer say that the chosen person has entered into kinship, or friendship, with God.[1] For this reason a person struck by lightning does not receive an ordinary burial and the usual mortuary rites are not held for him. I was under the impression, and have elsewhere stated, that, nevertheless, the formal rules of mourning were observed, but Dr. Mary Smith tells me that this is not so, and what she says is more in accordance with what I have recorded above.[2]

×776 766

A person is usually struck in his byre or hut and the walls of the burnt-out building are broken down over the body, and the

[1] In a published note on *colwic* (*Man*, 1949) I have translated a phrase, *'ca mar e kiroth'* by 'he has been brought into kinship with God'. As written it could mean this, but I now think that I may not have heard the words correctly and that what was said should be translated 'he was struck by God (with lightning)'. However, the idea of kinship, or friendship, with God was also expressed where the context allowed no room for misunderstanding.

[2] We find the same idea among the Shilluk. They do not bury or mourn a person killed by lightning. The death is an honour and the family feel that they have made an offering and will therefore prosper (the Rev. D. S. Oyler, 'Shilluk Notes', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1926, pp. 58–59). Dr. Lienhardt tells me that the Dinka also do not mourn a person killed by lightning.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

tested that surely a man would not kill or eat a creature he respects, I was told that 'it may be that a man is a fool and kills his *kwoth* deliberately'. Here we are to understand by *kwoth* a totem deriving from some maternal affiliation and not the totem of the man's own lineage. I was also told that it sometimes happens that a man does not know all the classes of objects he ought to respect or is uncertain about them. 'His father was forgetful and did not trouble to dedicate a cow to it (the spirit) or think of it at all, though he did not eat it (the totem). Then the son is forgetful too and one day they forget all about it and have no recollection of it at all.' Nuer also told me that it may happen that a boy is brought up among his mother's people and is not told by them about totems which have come into his father's family from Dinka women. In other words and in our way of speaking, people have totemistic relationships to the totems of persons with whom they have affinal and maternal links and these totemistic relationships are forgotten in course of time by their descendants, who may then be reminded of them by sickness. I do not think it could ever happen that a man could be ignorant of the totem of his own lineage, for I have found that children of under six years of age know it; or that a man would deliberately harm it.

Nevertheless, though a spirit associated with a natural species is most likely to seize persons who have some past connexion with it, any striking event, and particularly any sickness or other unfortunate event, might, Nuer think, bring about a totemistic relationship which could persist till it had hardened into a totemic one. The event is evidence of the action of Spirit and the conception of Spirit may become particularized by reference to the specific cause of misfortune in relation to the person or persons who have suffered it. Thus, as we have noted, a man may suffer from a disease and, after recovering from it, respect it. The disease was taken to be a manifestation of Spirit and the man who suffered it afterwards has not only the general relationship everyone has to God but also a particular relationship to God in his refraction as a spirit of the disease.

A totemistic, and potentially totemic, relationship may come about with regard to some class of objects through a man or a member of his family suffering any kind of misfortune. A man was killed by a fishing-spear and his children now respect fishing-spears. Another man was killed by the bite of a snake and his

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

children now respect this species of snake. Mgr. Mlakic records how a Nuer who has a tree for his totem told him that one of his ancestors had died from being pricked by a thorn of that tree. Anything may thus become a totem. Mgr. Mlakic also recounts how a Nuer refused to accept a milleme coin the Father offered him because a boy of his family, when playing with a milleme, got it into his ear and died. The family now respect millemes.[1]

A youth, a friend of mine in western Nuerland, had recently acquired a respect for speckled vultures. The Nuer consider it a misfortune if a speckled vulture, a hooded vulture, a Goliath heron, a maribou stork, or an egret settles on the crown of a byre or dwelling-hut. *'Theke ke, cike de nyur wi tie'*, 'they (the birds) respect them (byres and huts), they ought not to settle on their crowns'. If this happens a goat is sacrificed and the bird is asked why it should settle on a habitation. It is requested to accept the offering and take itself and all badness from the homestead. Nuer say that the bird is *kwoth*, Spirit, but, here again, they do not mean that the bird is in itself Spirit but that it is a form in which Spirit is beholden. Nuer know that the bird is *kwoth* only through its unusual behaviour. The man to whom I have referred went some years ago with a party of men to find a cow which had died in the bush. When they found it, some speckled vultures rose from the carcass and one of them settled on the man's head. This caused great consternation because its settling on the man's head showed the presence of Spirit. As soon as the party reached home a goat was sacrificed and left in the bush for the vultures to eat. From that time the man respected vultures. One day he told me that the night before he had dreamt of this incident and had early that morning visited a female diviner (*tiet*) to find out whether his dream presaged anything bad for him. She assured him that no harm would come to him as the vulture-spirit had been sacrificed to (*ca kir*) in the first place. If it had not been satisfied it would have caused him sickness long ago. All he need now do, she said, was to cut a piece off a goat's ear and tell the vultures that it was his gift to them. This he had at once done. I do not know of any lineages which have the vulture as their totem, but it became a totem for this man by its action of alighting on his head. Since such an event is regarded by Nuer as a manifestation of Spirit, through the happening there came into being for this man a

[1] Op. cit.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

CHAPTER VI

SOUL AND GHOST

I

775 Religion is the reciprocal relation between God and man. Our study of Nuer religion is therefore a study not only of this people's conception of *kwoth*, God, but also of their conception of *ran*, man, and of the relation between the two conceptions. They stand to each other as opposites, symbolized in the opposites of sky and earth; and this is one of the salient contrasts of Nuer thought. I have already discussed the ideas they have about God, and I now propose to discuss some of their ideas about man. We can perhaps best start this discussion by considering what happens at death when man disintegrates into his three component parts, *ring*, flesh, *yiegh*, breath or life, and *tie*, intellect or soul.

764 Nuer say that a man who does not fear death summons his family and closest kin to his death-bed, but all who are not grave-diggers leave his homestead immediately he is dead, and the grave is dug and the corpse buried as quickly as possible and without ceremony. Usually only two or three people dig the grave and these are senior kinsmen, or sometimes kinswomen. A member of a man's age-set must not dig his grave, and all children and young people keep away from the homestead, even those nearest to the dead, such as his sons and younger brothers, however grieved they may be at their loss. They may weep but they do [761] not attend the burial, for death is an evil thing and only those who must get rid of the corpse should go near the grave. Men do not wail, and if women wail it is not for long, just a little as soon as the person has died and again shortly before he is buried to let the neighbours know of the death and burial. I have never witnessed a burial and it was with difficulty I obtained a description of what happens. Death is a subject Nuer do not care to speak about.

The shaft is dug near the left-hand side (as one faces it) of the dead man's hut or, if he dies in camp, his windscreen. This is the *kwi giakni*, the side of evil. The grave is dug to the depth of a

765 nourished secret resentment in his heart, or a son may have had relations with one of his father's wives and not confessed his guilt. I was told that the bad half of the goat was eaten by persons unrelated to the dead man and the good half by members of his family.

765 768 Lam's goods which had been tied up for later distribution on the first day were now brought out again and divided among members of the family by the eldest son assisted by the master of ceremonies and some senior kinsmen. The clothes, beads, and ostrich-shell girdles were given to Lam's wives. His series of metal arm-rings was broken up and the rings distributed among the men and boys of the family.

765 The ceremonies were concluded by all the people shaving their heads. On this account the mortuary ceremony is often spoken of as the *mut*, the cutting. The cutting of the hair of the kin symbolizes the cutting off of the dead from the living just as in the marriage ceremonies the rite, known by the same word *mut*, by which the bride's hair is shaved off, symbolizes the cutting of the ties between her and her family and kin. The mortuary ceremony is one of deep 'silence and sadness', the marriage ceremony one of 'happiness and laughter'. They also say of the dead man *ca je mut*, he has been cut off (by this ceremony). It is clear from the orations and actions of the mortuary ceremony that part, perhaps the main part, of their purpose is to cut the dead from the living.

775 765 761 The dead man has to be given the full status of ghost and persuaded to accept it so that he will remain as a ghost and not try to return to the living with the taint of death on him. This is the constant refrain of the invocations: 'Now you ghosts, you are finished with us, you are the people of God, you are the people on the other side.'

That this is one of the main purposes of the ceremony is further shown by a curious observation I made in western Nuerland. There was living in a village there an unhappy-looking man of unkempt appearance, called Gatbuogh. This man had some years before gone on a distant journey and had not been heard of for a long time. Then there came to his village news of his death and in course of time the mortuary ceremony was held for him. He later returned home and was living in the village at the time of my visit. He was described as *joagh in tegh*, the living ghost. I was told *'ca tiede mut. ce tiede wa kene tie yang kel. ce te ni ringe*

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

775 765 761 *cunge'*, 'his soul was cut off. His soul went with the soul of the (sacrificed) ox together. His flesh alone remains standing.' His soul, the essential part of him, had gone and with it his social personality. Although people fed him he seems to have lost such privileges of kinship as pertain to the living and not to the dead. I was told that he could not partake of sacrificial meat because his agnatic kinship (*buth*) had been obliterated (*woc*) by the mortuary ceremony. A neighbour said to me 'he lives in our village with Baranyai but we do not count him a member of it because he is dead. The mortuary ceremony has been held for him.'

765 There were doubtless points I missed in the mortuary ceremony I witnessed and possibly some I did not hear about in later discussions with Nuer. A feature I did not observe but which, I was later told, is common, was the singing of hymns to the spirits of the air, in particular the hymn to *buk* which I have recorded earlier. These hymns are not an integral, and therefore essential, part of the ceremony and their meaning is in no way related to the matter in hand. They are in keeping, however, with the religious character of the rites and enhance it.

765 782 In conclusion I should say that Mayan told me at Dini that he would later cut the ears of the bulls of his dead father's herd and that this is always done when the dead man was a person of age and social importance. The cattle would then prosper. For such a man another ox may be sacrificed some months later. The master of ceremonies again prepares porridge for those who gather to honour the ghost, and the senior kinsmen again make speeches to God and to the dead man and to all the ghosts of the lineage. Before the animal is speared all the people, men, women and children, bring ashes of cattle-dung and rub them on the ox. I discuss the meaning of this act in later chapters. The meat is distributed to all present, and also the porridge and the beer, which has been prepared in advance. An ox sacrificed in this manner to honour a dead man is known as *thak bar* or *thak joka*. A man may at any time decide to honour his father in this way and Nuer sometimes set apart an ox or an old bull (*tut jookni*) for their dead fathers, as Lam had done for his father Tutthiang, and await a suitable occasion for sacrificing it, as when they see their fathers in dreams and know that they want something. An ox so set apart cannot be disposed of but must be kept in the herd till it is sacrificed.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

II

761 Two main questions arise from the account I have given of ceremonies connected with death: In what way do Nuer conceive of the disintegration of the person at death and how do they regard those who have departed? I discuss these two questions in turn, but I must say at the outset that Nuer are neither very clear nor very explicit in what they say about the matters they concern.

As I have said, Nuer avoid as far as possible speaking of death and when they have to do so they speak about it in such a way as to leave no doubt that they regard it as the most dreadful of all dreadful things. This horror of death[1] fits in with their almost total lack of eschatology. Theirs is a this-worldly religion, a religion of abundant life and the fullness of days, and they neither pretend to know, nor, I think, do they care, what happens to them after death.

761 774 196 When a man dies the flesh, the life, and the soul separate themselves out. The idea of *ring*, flesh, presents no difficulties. All creatures have *ring*, and it is what, when a man dies, is committed to the earth. *Yiegh*, life, is a more difficult concept, especially as, as will be seen, its meaning overlaps with that of *tie*, soul—they are different aspects of what in a living man is a single whole. *Yiegh* means both 'breath' and 'life'. In the sense of 'life' it may mean, according to the context, either mere life, what is common to man and all living creatures, or it may include the intellectual and moral faculties as well. At one end the meaning is much the same as *tegh*, life, in contrast to *liagh*, death, and at the other end it approximates to *tie*, the soul. A man's *yiegh* may be stronger or weaker according to circumstances. When he is drunk he is partly dead, and also when he is ill. Sleep is also a partial death, the death, Nuer say, for which people do not mourn. When a man is dying the life slowly weakens and then it departs from him altogether, and Nuer say it has gone to God from whom it came. Nuer ideas on this matter are relatively simple and also easy for us to understand. Life comes from God and to him it returns.

[1] Horror of death is probably the reason for the great reluctance with which Nuer discuss dreams, even impersonally and with reference only to stereotyped interpretations, for these only too often are prognostications of death: as when a man dreams of death, or of a fish called *rec ma car*, black fish, or of a turtle walking about which the dreamer fails to catch.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

SOUL AND GHOST

Tie corresponds to the *anima* in scholastic writings and presents many of the difficulties of that word. It would appear to be that part of the *yiegh* which embraces the intellectual and moral faculties of man, his rational soul as distinct from his mere life as a living creature.[1] It is used in varying contexts in a variety of senses and might sometimes be translated 'cleverness', 'wisdom', and 'disposition', but the English word that best covers its general sense is 'soul'. It is true that sometimes 'life' is a more appropriate rendering than 'soul', just as *yiegh* may sometimes be more suitably translated 'soul' than 'life', but when this is so it is the psychic life rather than the animal life that is to be understood. The essential difference, in spite of mutual overlap, between the two conceptions is clearly to be seen in the already related case of Gatbuogh. He ostensibly had breath and life (*yiegh*), but what made him a person (*ran*), his soul (*tie*), had departed. Hence, although he was described as 'a living ghost' he was also said to be 'dead'. It is to be seen also in the Nuer dogma about twins, that they are one person. Ostensibly each has his independent individual life, but they have a single soul and are therefore one person. The distinction also emerges at death. The *yiegh*, the life, returns to God at the moment of death, so we may suppose—and Nuer remarks on the whole lead us to the same conclusion—that what survives death in an independent, if shadowy, existence as a ghost or shade is the *tie*, the soul. I return to this aspect of the matter later.

Associated with the *tie* is the *tiep*, the common Nilotic word for a shadow or reflection. In Nuer it may simply mean 'shade', as the shade of a tree, and also the reflection of anything in water. When used for the human shadow it might sometimes be translated 'soul', though in its general sense *tiep* cannot be equated with *tie* and when it is used in a context where we might expect *tie* to be used it would seem to be in the sense of an external representation or symbol of the soul. There may be here a merging of ideas, but Nuer are nevertheless fully aware that a man's shadow is only a reflection visible at certain times and in certain circumstances

[1] Psychical functions are associated with the head and the heart. The head is the seat of intelligence and will and by synecdoche stands for the whole person, especially when a pronominal suffix is added. The heart is similarly used as a periphrasis for the personal pronoun when a man's affections, emotions, or sentiments are referred to. (Cf. Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 1949, pp. 77–88.)

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

775 626 761 I give some examples of the kind of circumstances in which *cien* acts. A man haunts his kinsmen because he was slain and they neither avenged him nor exacted compensation in cattle for his death. When a man slays a close kinsman 'they [may] say "do not spear him, let him die of *cien*"'. After a while he becomes distracted and his ears ring. He loses his wits and takes to wandering alone in the bush and to sleeping there by himself at night, or he wanders to a distant country and lives there haunted. 'Nuer have no sense. A man may slay even his mother's son in anger. Well, he haunts him from the grave. He [the living man] sits moping. For two or three days together he refuses food. He wanders by himself in the bush. Then he sickens and dies.' A man may kill another secretly when they are alone together in the bush and tell no one of the deed. Then the dead man's ghost will pursue him from the grave. I was told of a case of this kind among the eastern Jikany in which the slayer married some two or three years after his crime. His first child died, then his second child, then his third child; and 'he remained childless like an impotent m[illegible]'. He consulted a diviner, who wormed out of him that 'he had something in the earth', a euphemism for the body of his victim. On the diviner's advice he confessed and paid compensation for the life he had taken. Nuer told me also that a man who has witnessed a killing, though he had no part in it, yet if he keep silence, will suffer misfortune because 'it is like as though he had hidden the [dead] man'. A man who commits serious incest, such as one who has carnal relations with a woman and then with her daughter, and so causes the death of the daughter, will be haunted by her ghost. The ghost will summon him to the land of the dead, saying '*ban wa jogh*', 'let us go behind' [to the *jookni*, ghosts]. A [762] girl who is married to a man she detests and commits suicide may take vengeance from the grave on her kin who forced her to marry him. However, those Nuer whom I questioned were not in agreement in this case, some holding that the girl would not have *cuong*, right, and could not therefore harm her kin. A man who knows that his son had congress with his wife may keep silence, hoping that the son will confess and ask his forgiveness, but the son also keeps silence, even when he sees that his father is dying, so the father takes his resentment with him to the grave and punishes him from there. A man who has not been properly buried may haunt his kin. However, a man who has suffered any

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

injustice may take ghostly vengeance. Nuer say also that a ghost watches over his kin and punishes those who commit some grave fault, especially that of depriving his young sons of the cattle of his herd or of their sisters' marriages. When a father or other close kinsman summons a man from the grave to join him in death Nuer use the word *tul*, which has the sense of 'to punish', to describe his action as well as the word *cien*; and they may also use the verb *be*, with the sense of sending for, or coming to fetch, or returning to get something.

An appreciation of two considerations arising from what Nuer say about ghostly vengeance gives us a further understanding of their ideas about the dead. The dead are thought to have the same feelings as when they were alive. They are resentful of injustice and bear malice to those who have wronged them. It stands to reason therefore—and this is the second consideration—that it is only those who have recently departed who avenge themselves on the living, for it is only they who can have been wronged by them. Nuer do not think of *cien* in connexion with ancestral ghosts but only in connexion with those who have recently become ghosts. It would appear that a man can still take vengeance even after he has been dispatched to the community of the ghosts by the mortuary rites, but a dead man seems to be most dangerous and his living kinsmen the most vulnerable the less the lapse of time after his death, and consequently in the period between death and the mortuary ceremonies. Those nearest to the dead are those who are most likely to be affected, for though a man can *cien*, just as he can *biit*, anyone who has done him an injury, what has been said of the *biit* can be said of the *cien*: the closer the relationship of the persons concerned the worse both the offence and its consequences. Curses and ghostly vengeance are thus two sides to the same idea and in general they have the same social incidence.

To stop the effects of *cien* it is necessary to make sacrifice to God and, where possible, reparation to the ghost for the wrong done to him. Sacrifice without reparation is of no avail. Nuer say that it may temporarily wipe out (*woc*) the *cien* from the body of the haunted man, but it will return if he does not make amends. Therefore, when he makes sacrifice he tells God 'I am sorry, I have erred; take thy cow and let the *cien* leave me.' Nuer say that God is to understand that such an expression of contrition implies the intention to make reparation, if this is possible.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

sacrifice Spirit, even as most materially conceived of, eats the blood and the chyme, not even in the sense of consuming their essence. Clearly, they are not materially consumed. Nuer do not say that Spirit feeds on (*mieth*) or eats (*cam*) or drinks (*madh, ruidh*) them. They do not use these words, but say that God, or a spirit, *kan*, takes, them. It is not a question of eating anything—what eating there is is done by the people—but of taking something, the life. This would seem to be a matter of great importance in an estimation of Nuer religious thought.

When, therefore, Nuer say that the blood and the chyme belong to God we are to understand, I would suggest, that this is a way of saying that the life belongs to him. It is true that we cannot say for the Nuer, as for the Hebrews, that the blood is the life. The word for life, *yiegh*, is also the word for breath, so that if we were to say that anything 'is' the life we would have to say it of the breath; though even here the word 'is' must not be taken to imply identity but a symbolic relationship. We must rather suppose that the blood and the chyme, and especially the blood, are also symbols of the life.

Human blood has for the Nuer a peculiar psychical value. When kinsmen and neighbours fight they use clubs instead of spears. No doubt this convention is most easily explained as making homicide a less likely outcome than if spears were permitted and, should it happen that a man be killed, of making a settlement easier to bring about on the grounds of absence of intent; but there may be a different, or at any rate an additional, reason for it. It may be that behind it is the notion that not the same responsibility is felt if the life-blood does not flow as it would from a fatal spear wound—that in a sense the man has not taken the life, that the death happened of itself, as Nuer would put it. That Nuer have some such idea is shown by the fact that a ghoul may be killed with impunity, but only if he is beaten to death with clubs and his blood is not shed. The blood of a man slain with the spear is moreover thought to enter in some way into the slayer, and he must therefore at once have his arm cut by a leopard-skin priest to let it out. This must mean that blood is thought to have some vitality of its own. The rite of initiation must be held in a homestead because the blood of the initiates must not be shed outside the home, and care is taken to bury it in the holes into which it flows lest dogs eat it. These examples, and others could be cited,